



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 8**

1595 Wynkoop Street
DENVER, CO 80202-1129
Phone 800-227-8917
<http://www.epa.gov/region08>

Ref: EPR-NCAR

October 30, 2009

Kris Rutledge, Environmental Coordinator
Ashley National Forest, Supervisor's Office
355 North Vernal Avenue
Vernal, UT 84078

Subject: Motorized Travel Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) (CEQ# 20090339)
Ashley National Forest, Duchesne, Daggett, Uintah Counties; Sweetwater County

Dear Kris Rutledge:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the above-referenced document pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and our NEPA review authority under Section 309 of the Clean Air Act. We are generally satisfied with your responses to our comments that were produced in your content analysis process. While our comments were grouped with others by specific resource topic, we feel that all our concerns were identified and addressed or clarified in the Final EIS. We are appreciative of the climate change effects discussion in § 3.13.1.

EPA reiterates its appreciation of the Forest Service in addressing the challenges presented during the development of a balanced motorized travel plan that responds to recreational opportunity and resource protection demands. We acknowledge that the Forest Scale Roads Analysis (2005) process was an essential first step in addressing resource impacts from motorized travel. We believe the reduction of routes available for public motorized use on the hatched area of the Vernal Ranger District to only designated routes and the switch from unmanaged to managed motorized recreational use will result in substantial environmental benefits.

We encourage the Forest Service to annually review and analyze the National Forest System (NFS) transportation, pursuant to Travel Management Rule direction, to maintain only the minimum road system needed (36 CFR Part 212 Subpart A). The NFS transportation will be sustainable if it addresses known road-related resource impairments and use conflicts that arise from the existing NFS road network and the unauthorized user-created system. Annual review will help to align the transportation system with maintenance funding levels and ranger district enforcement capabilities.

We appreciate the opportunity to participate in the review of this project, and look forward to implementation of the motor vehicle use map. If we may provide further assistance during the next stage of your implementation and monitoring process, please contact me at (303) 312-6004, or James Hanley of my staff at (303) 312-6725.

Sincerely,

/original signed by James E. Hanley, acting/

Larry Svoboda
Director, NCAR Program
Ecosystems Protection and Remediation